

Type of individual differences psychology essay



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A person differing from others is understandable, but how and why a person differs is less clear and is therefore a subject of the study of individual differences (Revelle, 2000). Individual differences are the differences among individuals, in regards to a single characteristic or number of characteristics, which in their totality distinguish one individual from another and make oneself a unique individual (Mangal, 2007). Characteristics that define individual differences can be classified into four main categories: Learning Style, Aptitude, Personality and Emotional Intelligence.

1. 2 Learning Style

Learning Style refers to the idea that every individual is different in regards to what manner of coaching or study is most useful for them (Pashler, et al., 2008). Many people tend to realize that they have a unique learning style, and it therefore affects how well they learn under certain circumstances. Some learn best by hearing information, while others see and/or write down information (Cherry, 2012). According to David Kolb; learning involves the gaining of abstract concepts, which are the intangible ideas that can be applied fluidly in a variety of situations (McLeod, 2013). His theory suggests that new experiences provide the necessary drive for the development of new ideas and concepts, which is knowledge.

Kolb's experience-based learning style theory is a four stage learning cycle in which effective learning can only be seen when an individual is able to accomplish all four stages of the cycle (McLeod, 2013). Regardless of where he/she starts first, the individual must go through its logical sequence since each stage is jointly supportive of and moving into the next. The cycle

consists of: Concrete Experience f Reflective Observation f Abstract Conceptualization f Active Experimentation (McLeod, 2013).

Concrete Experience: A new experience or situation is encountered, or a reinterpretation of an existing experience.

Reflective Observation: Surveillance of others or developing interpretations about one's own knowledge/experience.

Abstract Conceptualization: Daydreaming/Intuition/Reflection leads to a new idea, or a variation of an existing abstract concept – learners create theories to explain observations.

Active Experimentation: The learner applies its knowledge/experience/observations to the world around them in real time to see its outcome – using theories to explain/answer problems and make proper judgments.

1.3 Aptitude

The term aptitude is sometimes treated the same as abilities, particularly when the focus is on prediction of performance in other settings or occasions (Kyllonen & Gitomer, 2002). Abilities are cognitive or mental characteristics that affect one's potential to learn or to perform, whereas aptitude includes any number of individual-differences factors that influence one's willingness or chances of learning or performing successfully (Kyllonen & Gitomer, 2002). Even Aptitude and Intelligence Quotient (IQ) tend to relate in view of human mental ability, however, they are in fact quite the opposite. IQ sees intelligence as being a single measurable characteristic affecting all mental

ability, whereas aptitude breaks mental ability down into many different characteristics which are supposed to be more or less independent of each other (wikia. com, 2013).

Similarly – skills, abilities and aptitudes are related but are separate descriptions of what a person can do, and thus, should not be conflated (wikia. com, 2013). Skills are a backward looking description (wikia. com, 2013); it describes what a person has learned to do in the past. Abilities are a present description (wikia. com, 2013); it describes what a person can do now. Aptitudes, however, are a forward looking description (wikia. com, 2013); it describes a person's potential to learn from the past and apply its learning in the future. All these describe what and how a person can learn to do something effectively. It is also assumed that a learner with high aptitude gains knowledge at greater speed with no difficulty, but other learners may not be successful unless they are determined (Alemi, 2006).

1. 4 Personality

Personality psychologists are interested in the unique characteristics of individuals, as well as relationships among groups of people (Cherry, 2011). A person is able to stand out in the crowd due its personality; this is made up of the characteristic patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in an individual (Cherry, 2011). While some outer forces can influence how certain characteristics are expressed, personality originates from inside an individual. While a few characteristics of personality may change with age, personality is likely to remain somewhat reliable during the whole life (Cherry, 2011). The major characteristics of personality are:

Personality is Organized and Consistent (Cherry, 2011): People tend to communicate certain features of their personality in various circumstances and their responses are usually stable.

Personality is Psychological, but is influenced by Biological Needs and Processes (Cherry, 2011): While an individual's personality might lead him/her to be calm in normal situations, but when threatened or provoked it might lead him/her to be more aggressive.

Personality 'causes' behaviors to happen (Cherry, 2011): People respond to others and objects in their surroundings based on their personality. From private preferences to choice of profession, every facet of their existence is affected by their personality.

Personality is displayed through thoughts, feelings, behaviors and many other ways (Cherry, 2011): An individual's presence/existence all together releases energy of good or bad vibes depending on how they connect with all that encompasses their surroundings.

1.5 Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is the ability to process emotions (Toyota, 2011); it is the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings, to differentiate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action (Salovey & Grewal, 2005). A four-branch model proposed by Mayer and Salovey identifies EI as a set of four related abilities: Perceiving, Using, Understanding, and Managing Emotions (Salovey & Grewal, 2005).

Perceiving Emotions: The ability to detect and interpret emotions in faces, pictures, voices, and cultural artifacts. It also includes the ability to identify one's own emotions.

Using Emotions: The ability to control emotions to smooth the progress of various cognitive activities, such as thinking and problem solving.

Understanding Emotions: The ability to understand emotion language and to value complex affairs among emotions. Furthermore, it includes the ability to recognize and describe how emotions develop over time, such as how shock can turn into grief.

Managing Emotions: Consists of the ability to manage and normalize emotions in both ourselves and in others.

Task for M1:

2. 0 Choose a psychometric test for each type that would yield the most valid and reliable results in the workplace.

2. 1 Psychometric Test – A Brief Overview

The word ' Psychometric' came from the Greek words ' psyche' (mental) and ' metron' (measurement) (Price, 2010). Thus, psychometric tests are structured assessments that aim to measure, without bias, characteristics of an individual's mental capacity, or aspects of their personality (Price, 2010).

There are many different types of psychometric tests available to employers aimed at addressing a different aspect of an individual's character and behavior. They use it as it offers greater objectivity, reliability and validity than interviews, and also helps provide additional information that helps the employer to create an overall profile of employees and to foresee how they

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will function in the workplace (HJB. com, 2013). The tests are homogeneous which means that all applicants sit the same assessment and are scored according to the same criteria, no matter where or when the test is completed (HJB. com, 2013). However, taking a wide range of tests could be helpful when taking a broad approach to personal development and understanding. It depends upon individuals' needs as to how they approach, or want to approach, their personal development (Becker, 2011). They probably might want to focus on improving in areas in which their performance is weak. Then again, great progress is made in achieving objectives when strengths are identified and developed (Becker, 2011). Therefore, psychometric testing can assist in choosing the approach that will deliver the most benefit.

2. 2 Types of Psychometric Tests

Psychometric assessments fall under two groups. The first measures and evaluates an individual's ability to understand verbal/written words or their ability to reason with numerical figures (Farrington, 2007), or to follow directions as asked (Price, 2010). The second measures personality traits through personality tests (Farrington, 2007), assessing everything from motivation to values, from personality inclinations to working preferences (Price, 2010). In the world of employment, the choice of test is extremely vital since such tests are used: during the recruitment phase to select the best candidate, or to help select candidates for career advancement (Price, 2010). As a result, tests are gradually more customized to the jobs they are used for.

2.3 Learning Style Psychometric Test

The Learning Styles Questionnaire (LSQ) was developed to determine an individual's preferred learning style (PsychPress. com, 2013). There are four learning styles (Watts, 2007):

Activist: Engage themselves fully in all new experiences.

Reflector: Like to pause and take time to evaluate their experiences from every angle.

Theorist: Like to adapt what they see into their own words in order to create their own theories, which are accurate but can appear overly complicated.

Pragmatist: Are eager to try out fresh ways of doing things to see if they can be put into practice and yield results.

Most people prefer certain learning styles over others. As a result, their preference tends to misrepresent the learning procedure as such that greater emphasis is placed on some stages to the disadvantage of the other stages (PsychPress. com, 2013). Therefore, LSQs provide a key to understanding these different preferences. People gain learning styles through repetition of successful strategies and tactics while they put an end to those that are not, which leads to the development of preferences for different behavioral patterns that become habitual (PsychPress. com, 2013). Therefore, LSQs help people to learn effectively about themselves so that they may be saved from inapt learning experiences. To put it another way, LSQs help assessors find strengths and weaknesses of individuals efficiently and offer suitable learning prospects based on the results (PsychPress. com,

2013). A thorough understanding of learning styles enable the tailoring of education and training programs to suit an individual or group (PsychPress. com, 2013). By establishing the preferred learning style of the individual, it is possible to identify particular forms of learning to which individuals respond in an LSQ (PsychPress. com, 2013), and this helps improve individual and group performance. Similarly, by identifying their learning styles, individuals can be put into pairs or groups so that it may enhance their learning (PsychPress. com, 2013). This makes training and development as well as other learning activities valuable and less challenging for the participants, and thus helps in reducing training costs (PsychPress. com, 2013).

2. 4 Aptitude Psychometric Test

Aptitude tests attempt to measure trait intelligence (IQ) and cognitive ability in individuals from the indication of their efficiency in processing information (PsychometricInstitute. com, 2013). Intelligence is either fluid or crystallized (PsychometricInstitute. com, 2013). Crystallized intelligence involves verbal or language-based accumulated knowledge developed mainly through education and other life experiences (PsychometricInstitute. com, 2013).

However, fluid intelligence indicates adaptability and flexibility in the face of new experiences that do not allow automated reasoning

(PsychometricInstitute. com, 2013). An example would be where logic is needed in identifying an odd shape from a number of shapes in an odd-one-out type question.

Since an individual's aptitude is complex, therefore Computerized Adaptive Testing (CAT) is used. It is a widely accepted method of online psychometric testing that includes aptitude tests, reasoning tests, verbal reasoning tests

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and numerical reasoning tests (PsychometricInstitute. com, 2013). Although the programming, testing properties and science behind CAT are quite complex, the course, as experienced by the candidate, is not (PsychometricInstitute. com, 2013). Even though the test is taken online, it has many advantages compared to written tests such as; reduced administration time, reduced test-taking time, and increased reliability for measuring applicants' aptitude (PsychometricInstitute. com, 2013). CAT also trims down the quantity of items in online psychometric tests by optimally customizing items to the candidate (PsychometricInstitute. com, 2013). Even the practice for CAT-based tests is identical to practicing traditional online psychometric tests, and since all of it is computer-based and administered online, practicing for these types of psychometric tests is considered ideal (PsychometricInstitute. com, 2013).

2. 5 Personality Psychometric Test

Personality tests are assessments for which, as a matter of fact, a candidate requires the least preparation (PsychPress. com, 2013). The reason is because personality tests tend to assess an individual's somewhat stable behavioral trends and preferences within an occupational perspective (PsychPress. com, 2013). Personality tests are based on behavior mainly due to the indirect and complex nature of an individual's personality (PsychPress. com, 2013). If used appropriately, these tests can be extremely helpful in improving knowledge of one's self and other people.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), based on Carl Jung's theory of personality types (Price, 2012), is a personality test designed to indicate the psychological types of an individual's personality, its strengths and

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preferences (Cherry, 2012) so as to find out the reasons for individual differences (Price, 2012). MBTI aims to let candidates discover and understand more about their own personalities which includes; likes, dislikes, strengths, weaknesses, job preferences and compatibility with others (Cherry, 2012). One other thing worth noting is that the questions in these tests have no allocated correct answer (Price, 2012) because no one personality type is “ best” or “ better” than any other one (Cherry, 2012). This test isn't a means to look for dysfunction or abnormality, but rather help individuals learn more about themselves (Cherry, 2012). The test is made up of four different scales (Cherry, 2012):

Extraversion (E) - Introversion (I): Extraverts are more open and lively, they are more social, and they are filled with energy after spending time with other people. Introverts are more into themselves; they tend to think a lot, they enjoy meaningful social interactions, and are filled with energy after spending time alone.

Sensing (S) - Intuition (N): This scale indicates how people collect information from their surroundings. Individuals, who pay a great deal of attention to reality, especially to what they can learn from their own senses, are sensing. Those who are intuitive consider stuff like patterns and impressions.

Thinking (T) - Feeling (F): This scale focuses on decisions people make that are based on information they gather through their sensing or intuition functions. People are more into thinking when they stress on facts and

objectives data. People who put greater emphasis on feelings arrive at a conclusion based on people and emotions.

Judging (J) – Perceiving (P): This scale is about how people tend to deal with the outside world. People who like structure and firm decisions are more judging. People who are more open, flexible and adaptable, are more perceiving.

Then based on the answers to the questions in the MBTI test, it points out to sixteen different personality types such as ISTJ, ISTP, ISFJ, etc (Cherry, 2012). Due to MBTI ease of use, it has become one of the most popular psychological instruments. According to the Myers & Briggs Foundation, the MBTI meets accepted standards of reliability and validity (Cherry, 2012).

2. 6 Emotional Intelligence Psychometric Test

Emotional Intelligence (EI) tests help evaluate several aspects of an individual's EI and suggest ways to improve it (Queendom. com, 2013), so that they can understand the level of their relation with emotions (Agarwal, 2007). It helps an individual to understand themselves better in order to deal better with themselves, and know what to avoid and what not to (Agarwal, 2007).

The Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) is the most often used test of emotional intelligence (Daniels, 2010). This test focuses on emotions rather than intellectual skills (Daniels, 2010). MSCEIT comprises items such as to; identify the emotion in given pictures of people's faces, select which emotion can help achieve particular tasks, understand the way emotions interact and blend among them, and to recognize how they can

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use their emotions in difficult social situations (Daniels, 2010). The MSCEIT measures emotional intelligence in terms of four key competencies, including an individual's ability to: (i) Recognize their own and others' emotions, (ii) Generate and use emotions in problem solving, (iii) Understand emotions and how emotions may change, and (iv) Manage their own and others' emotions (Onetest. com, 2010).

It has been confirmed that people with high EI prove to be thriving in life than those with lower EI, even if their Intelligence Quotient (IQ) is average (Queendom. com, 2013). This is because people with higher EI are better able to express their emotions in a healthy way, and better able to understand the emotions of colleagues; therefore, leading to better work relationships and performance. In the workplace, it leads to successful leadership, increased productivity and higher customer satisfaction (Onetest. com, 2010). On a personal level, it ultimately leads to a more successful and fruitful life.